

CIA 4 Turkey

Destabilizing Turkey

Recognition has been spreading that the chaotic condition of Turkey is one of the gravest threats to the Western alliance. In one of the Carter administration's best moments it persuaded Congress to repeal the destructive arms embargo arising from the Cyprus conflict. Western financial authorities are studying the question of how they can help the Turkish economy. The Senate, overriding its own Foreign Relations Committee, voted last week to send \$50 million in arms as a grant rather than a loan.

Just at this moment, though, the Carter administration has started to pressure the Turks for permission to fly U-2 airplanes in their airspace to monitor Soviet compliance with the nascent strategic arms agreement. This request is to Turkish politics what a skunk is to a picnic. And the lesson goes beyond any one country, showing how preoccupation with a dubious arms agreement erodes broader American security interests.

The U-2 missions might come under the heading of verification eye-wash. They are intended to impress not the Russians but the U.S. Senate. With the U-2 flights in place, the administration will have something to point to as making up for the lost monitoring stations in Iran. So Senators like John Glenn, who fundamentally favors the treaty, will be able to say their verification worries have been solved and urge ratification.

There is no guarantee, though, that the Soviets will hold up their missile tests until we can get a U-2 in the air. In any event, the most troublesome verification-compliance issues don't have to do with monitoring stations but with treaty language: What is a "missile launcher"? What is a "heavy bomber"? When is a missile "deployed"? U-2s in Turkey are at best a marginal substitute for stations in Iran, and no substitute whatever for hard-headed treaty provisions.

The U-2 is perfectly designed, though, for reminding the Turks about all the dangers of being allied with the United States. Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over Russia and imprisoned for espionage in 1960, took off from a Turkish base. This embarrassment first raised Turkish doubts about the U.S., and was then

missiles there, and by pressures over Cyprus and the arms embargo.

After all of these capricious policy twists, the Americans now come to Turkey wanting to reinstitute U-2 flights in Turkish airspace (though not from Turkish bases). Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit has opposed the flights all of his political career. His chief political opponent, former Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, made the decision to suspend the flights back in 1965. Mr. Ecevit has been saying that the Russians have to consent first, and was reportedly furious when Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher linked the flights with "congressional attitudes" toward Turkish aid.

There is the further problem of what precedents may be set about the use of Turkish airspace. If Soviet Backfire bombers can freely overfly Turkey, the U.S. fleet may as well forget the Eastern Mediterranean which has littoral regions like Israel and Egypt. U.S. security interests are not served by arrangements that give the Soviets a say over Turkish airspace, or by the precedent that Turkish airspace is available for overriding international purposes.

This is, then, a neat example of the imbalance that SALT has introduced into American diplomacy. Just when our interests call for reassuring the Turks, we find ourselves grating on a raw nerve. We are sending the message that the sensitivities and risks of our allies—and indeed some of our own narrow military interests—take second place even to practically cosmetic aspects of the Soviet-American arms treaty. The Turks can only become less trustful of the U.S. and more fearful of offending their Soviet neighbors.

The Turkish example is worth keeping in mind in a broader context. As SALT is debated, the administration will point to endorsements by Western European leaders, despite provisions obviously detrimental to their interests. But like the Turks, they are under double pressure: The U.S. will exert maximum leverage on this issue; but at the same time the U.S. looks so feckless it is not prudent to annoy the Russians. But no matter what kind of lip service is won, letting a Soviet-American treaty override the interests of our allies is no way to cement good way to destabilize our friends.